

ALABAMA PLANNER



American Planning Association
Alabama Chapter

Making Great Communities Happen

A Publication of the Alabama Chapter of the American Planning Association

The purpose of the Alabama Chapter of the American Planning Association is to help residents of the State improve the quality of their lives through rational and comprehensive approaches to physical, economic, and human resource planning.

*This mission is achieved by: **Promoting** planning approaches in response to developmental and social opportunities and challenges facing the State; **Increasing** awareness of the planning process, the planning profession and the benefits that both can bring to the State of Alabama; **Supporting** planning education and fostering the growth of professional planners' knowledge and skills; **Encouraging** the exchange of planning information and experience in Alabama; and **Working** with other organizations in the State to foster common goals.*

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2012 - 2014**

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

HAPPY NEW YEAR EVERYONE!

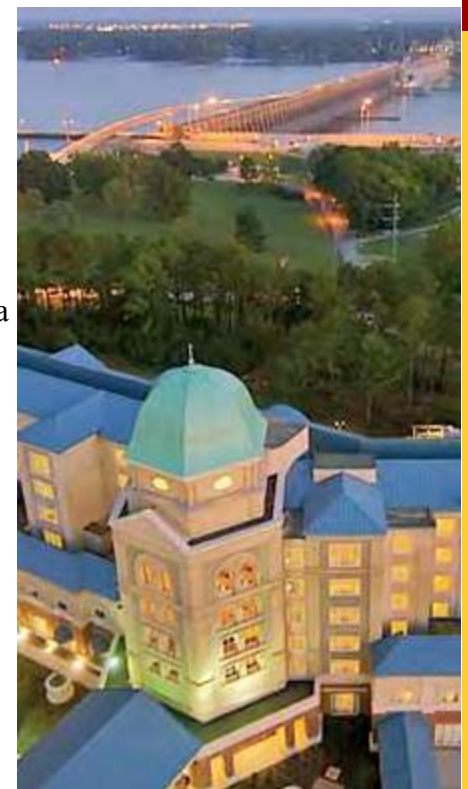
I hope the New Year is starting out filled with hope and excitement for you and your families. Your ALAPA Executive Committee began the year off right with our first meeting of the new year on January 18th and we are looking forward to moving the Chapter forward as 2013 progresses.

Your Section Representatives have been holding socials and training activities during the past few months and they have plenty more planned for you in the months to come. Keep an eye on the website calendar for what's on the schedule for your section and what is going on in other sections that you might want to attend.

Of course the big thing on our mind right now is the upcoming ALAPA Annual Conference which is schedule for May 1-3, 2013 at the Marriott Shoal Hotel & Spa in Florence, Alabama. This year we will take a look at a long neglected subject in Planning, that of how we will help ensure a good quality of life for our exploding population of Senior Citizens as well as that of children and individuals with disabilities. To help us with this we are fortunate to be able to partner with AARP who will be sponsoring several guest speakers from across the country to share their expertise with us on these subjects. In addition to those topics there will be sessions on green infrastructure, transportation, law and ethics updates and much more.

In this issue

Letter from the President.....	1
Dedicated Paths & Lanes.....	3
CBDG Loan Study.....	4
National Planning Awards.....	6
Livable Communities.....	7
Great Public Places.....	8
Call for Nominations.....	9
Intern Scholarships.....	10
Jobs for Planners.....	10



Florence, Alabama, Marriott Shoals Hotel & Spa; location of the 2013 ALAPA Annual Conference.

(Continued on Page 2)

WINTER 2013

(Continued from Page 1)

There is still space open if you wish to be a presenter, exhibitor or sponsor (or all three) for this conference, check out our website for more information on these and other opportunities to participate in your ALAPA Chapter activities.

I hope you will plan to join us for the conference for the educational value as well s the networking opportunities. Registration will be opening the end of January; I truly hope I will see you there.

Until next time, please be safe and get out and enjoy Alabama's cooler winter temperatures – it will be summer before you know it.

Warm Winter Wishes,



Katherine E. Ennis, AICP
Chapter President
Alabama Chapter-American Planning Association

News You Can Use:

The County Planning Division/National Association of County Planners' Project Awards honor outstanding achievements in county planning. Apply by February 8, 2013. Learn more at www.planning.org/divisions/countyplanning/awards/.

The Economic Development Division's Excellence in Economic Development Award honors innovative and successful community plans or projects. Apply by February 15, 2013. Learn more at www.planning.org/divisions/economic/awards.

APA's next audio/web conference will be **Fracking and Resource Extraction and Community Planning** on February 13, 2012 from 4:00 to 5:30 pm., Eastern Time. Visit www.planning.org/audioconference/series/planningmistakes.htm for more information.

APA's Planners Training Service Schedule:

Sustainable Development Through Form-Based Codes on February 19, 2013 in Portland, Oregon. Workshop is approved for 7.0 hours of CM credit. Visit www.planning.org/pts/ for more information.

APA National Conference:

April 13-17, 2013 in Chicago, Illinois. (Early registration ends on February 14, 2013.)

The logo for AIRSAGE, featuring the word "AIRSAGE" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The letters "AIR" are in a lighter blue shade, while "SAGE" is in a darker blue. The text is enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Dedicated Paths and Lanes: Their Influence on Bike Commuting

In recent years, cities across the country have addressed the need for cycling infrastructure in various ways. Some cities, such as [New York](#) and [Chicago](#), have added on-street bike lanes. Others have added [cycling paths](#) or [off-street multimodal trails](#) that cyclists share with pedestrians, runners, and in-line skaters.

A [recent study](#) published in the journal *Transportation* examined bike commuting in 90 of the largest American cities and the influence that bike paths and lanes have on commuter cycling rates. The study, conducted by Ralph Buehler of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and John Pucher of Rutgers University, found that cities with more bike paths and lanes have significantly higher rates of bike commuting, even when factors that influence cycling rates – such as weather, cycling safety, degree of sprawl, and the price of gasoline – are taken into account. This study assesses bike lanes and paths separately to determine how the different types of cycling infrastructure influence commuter cycling behavior.

Data Analysis

Buehler and Pucher used 2008 city-level data, collected by the League of American Bicyclists and the Alliance for Biking and Walking, that describe the availability of bike lanes and paths. To analyze variation in bike commuting across cities, the study used data from the 2006–2008 American Community Survey (ACS) on commuting behavior.

Although ACS data show that, on average, less than one percent of the population cycles to work, Buehler says that the actual number of bike commuters may be higher. The ACS asked people to report only their primary mode of transportation (even if they used more than one). As a result, the data likely does not capture part-time biking activity of people who bike to work once or twice a week but drive or take public transportation the rest of the time. The ACS survey question also does not capture data on seasonal bike commuters or commuters who cycle to or from public transportation. Finally, Buehler points out, the ACS does not measure non-commuting bike trips, such as errands or doctor appointments. As these types of trips are not captured in the ACS data, the study was limited to the influence of bike lanes and paths on bike commuting.

Elements That Influence Bike Commuting

Nevertheless, the study found that cities with more bike paths and lanes, on-street lanes, and off-street paths have higher rates of bike commuters. Other findings included:

- Of the 90 U.S. cities included in the study, Portland, Madison, Minneapolis, Boise, and Seattle had the highest percentages of bike commuters.
- Higher shares of college students in an area's overall population, as well as increases in gas prices, are associated with higher bike commuting levels, whereas higher cyclist fatality rates are associated with lower rates of bike commuters.
- Higher sprawl ratings and higher levels of car ownership are associated with lower cycling rates.

Buehler notes that bike paths and lanes affect different kinds of cyclists. For instance, he says, younger, male cyclists are more likely to cycle in on-street bike lanes, while older and female riders are more likely to cycle in off-street bike paths. Either way, says Buehler, "[b]uilding bicycle networks is positively connected to cycling levels."

This article was provided by HUD USER.

Study Examines CDBG Loan Guarantee Program

HUD has sponsored a study that investigates Section 108, the provision in [CDBG's authorizing legislation](#) that allows grantees to borrow up to five times the amount of their annual grant through loans backed by the full faith and credit guaranty of HUD. These loans markedly expand the size and reach of local community development projects completed with CDBG funds and are especially important to local governments struggling to finance development needs during the economic recovery. The resulting report, "[Study of HUD's Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program](#)," describes this recent investigation of how communities used Section 108 funds and reports on the project outcomes from loans made in fiscal years 2002 to 2007.

Earlier studies by the U.S. General Accounting Office, the White House Office of Management and Budget, HUD's Office of Policy Development and Research, and the Urban Institute have examined various questions raised about the Section 108 program: How are the loan funds used? Does Section 108 unnecessarily duplicate other federal economic development efforts? What risk does HUD assume by guaranteeing these loans? What are the outcomes of this resource for communities?¹ The new study attempts to answer these questions using data collected and analyzed from surveys, site visits, and administrative records for projects funded during the study period.

Diverse Projects, Minimal Duplication and Risk, and the Need for Better Performance Measurement

HUD's Section 108 loan commitment from 2002 to 2007 totaled \$1.4 billion. The average loan size was \$4.9 million for 296 projects across the country, ranging from \$159,000 to more than \$59 million. Researchers found that the most common types of projects funded with these loans involved economic development (60%), public facilities (31%), and housing (9%). These activities are consistent with the CDBG program's national objectives, which are to benefit low- and moderate-income people, eliminate or prevent slum and blight conditions, and meet other urgent, recently emergent community needs. The prevailing activity was hard cost construction (visible physical improvements such as foundations, walls, roofs, electrical work, and plumbing), which accounted for almost half of all planned project expenses. (See table 1).

Table 1. Projected Uses of Project Funds Based on Section 108 Project Application Materials

Funding Use and Number of Projects

Hard Cost—Construction (142)	Hard Cost—Equipment (37)
Acquisition of Land (127)	Public Facility Development (37)
Professional Services—A&E (79)	Environmental Review— Mitigation/Remediation (34)
Soft Cost—Other (75)	Relocation (33)
Cost of Financing (62)	Soft Cost—Financial Reserve (29)
Soft Cost—Construction Contingency (61)	Soft Cost—Fees (29)
Interest Payments (59)	Infrastructure—Streets (27)
Rehabilitation/Renovation (52)	Soft Cost—Management and Administration (26)
Site Improvements (45)	Soft Cost—Developer/Owner Overhead Profit/Fee (25)
Demolition/Clearance or site preparation (43)	Infrastructure—General/Other (16)
Loans and Grants (41)	Infrastructure—Water and Sewer (13)
Other (38)	Infrastructure—Utilities (13)
Professional Services—Other (38)	Environmental—Other (8)

Researchers identified 679 unique sources for (and 1,074 unique uses of funds by) these Section 108 projects. Grantees were not required to leverage outside funding for projects that used Section 108 loans, but for those that did, each Section 108 dollar generated an average of \$4.62 of largely private monies. In some cases, the leveraged funds were conditioned on approval of the Section 108 loans, whereas in others, these funds bridged the gap between Section 108 dollars and other committed funding to meet total project costs. Loan repayment took various forms, but most economic development projects depend on program-generated revenue such as rent, sales, third-party loan repayments, and increased tax collection. When interviewed, grantees and field office personnel emphasized how important it was to vet projects and structure Section 108 loans properly to avoid repayment difficulties. Both primary and secondary funding sources are pledged in the loan application, all of which would have to fail before a default occurred. As for grantee failures to meet loan obligations, HUD has never had to use its full faith and credit guaranty as a backstop and has never used credit subsidy funds reserved for future loss.

To explore the question of whether Section 108 duplicates existing federal efforts, the research team examined 10 federal programs that support economic development to see if those funds might have been used in lieu of Section 108. The researchers concluded that the superficial similarities to other programs were less significant than the distinctive urban development targeting and flexible requirements of the Section 108 program. Three-fourths of grantees stated that their projects would not be possible without Section 108 funding. Communities view Section 108 as a valuable tool that is flexible, supports a variety of activities, has low interest rates, provides seed money and gap financing, makes large projects feasible, and complements other programs and funding sources.

To study the results of Section 108 projects, researchers investigated how outcomes are measured, reported, and documented. Although the study team was able to obtain some results, complete data on project accomplishments were not uniformly available. Staff shortages, the length of HUD's approval process, lack of technical expertise, local regulations, and reluctant reporting by private businesses all hindered efforts to maintain accurate documentation. Some information exists; grantees report accomplishments in annual reports, and HUD keeps relevant financial information (including contracts and promissory notes) for Section 108 loans on file. HUD also has some outcome data for individual projects and maintains a database reflecting respective projects' anticipated job creation and retention rates.

Overall, researchers determined that the Section 108 program works well in diverse communities. Room for improvement clearly exists in several administrative areas, such as streamlining application procedures, instituting a more formal approval process for necessary changes in ongoing projects, and creating a reporting system with standard performance measures that permit meaningful program assessments and improvements. The study team suggests that implementing these recommendations could better demonstrate Section 108's ability to fill a crucial funding void for economic development projects in local communities. Some administrative improvements are already under consideration.

This article was provided by HUD USER.

1 United States General Accounting Office, "[Multiple Federal Programs Fund Similar Economic Development Activities: Report to Congressional Committees](#)" 2000. Accessed 25 September 2012; United States General Accounting Office, "[Opportunities To Reduce Potential Duplication in Government Programs, Save Tax Dollars, and Enhance Revenue](#)" 2011. Accessed 25 September 2012; Office of Management and Budget, "[Program Assessment, Section 108 Community Development Loan Guarantee Program](#)" 2007. Accessed 25 September 2012; and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research, "Section 108 and Possibly Duplicative Programs," 2007, internal unpublished document.

APA National Planning Awards: Advancing Diversity & Social Change in Honor of Paul Davidoff

The American Planning Association (APA) has announced that the YWCA Central Alabama in Birmingham, Alabama has been awarded the Advanced Diversity & Social Change in Honor of Paul Davidoff National Planning Award for 2013. The YWCA Central Alabama undertook a multimillion-dollar urban neighborhood revitalization effort called *YWoodlawn*. The *YWoodlawn Plan* was a collaborative empowerment initiative intended to reduce poverty and hopelessness within an underserved area of Birmingham through reinvesting in the neighborhood; providing innovative housing for families experiencing homelessness; introducing affordable transition housing for families; bringing health, education, and employment-based services to the community's doorstep; and reintroducing homeownership opportunities in a stable, growing community.

Between 2007 and 2011, YWCA Central Alabama completed three major components of its *YWoodlawn* project including: a permanent housing initiative with 58 housing units, eight of which are entirely ADA accessible rental units; the YWCA's Interfaith Hospitality House, a shelter for families experiencing the crisis of homelessness; and the Family Resource Center, a community center offering assistance and supportive services to those seeking social and economic empowerment.

City of Dothan Wins Award

The City of Dothan will receive one of 16 Honor Awards from the American Council of Engineering Companies of Alabama. The Award recognizes the "City of Dothan Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan" developed for the city by the firms of Neel-Schaffer and Praestare Engineering. The Plan was adopted by both the Planning Commission and City Commission in November 2011 and is being implemented utilizing a variety of funding mechanisms.



Aging, Livable Communities & Economic Demands

By

Ramona Mullahey

The U.S. is undergoing a demographic transformation. On January 1, 2011, the very first Baby Boomers born between January 1, 1946 and December 31, 1964, turned 65. Further, the Pew Research Center has projected that about 10,000 people “will cross that threshold” every day over the next 19 years. By 2030, the 65 and older population will have grown to 18 percent. By 2050, 20 percent of Americans will be 65 or older, an increase of 120 percent from 40 million to over 88 million.

As today’s population live longer, the cost of healthcare rises, dramatically increasing demands on entitlement programs such as social security and Medicare. Those two factors are going to make it incredibly challenging to address the needs of retiring Baby Boomers, especially as many of them have no intention of ceding their independence and their youthful perspective towards life.

This means that the 79 million baby boomers, about 26 percent of this country’s population, will be redefining what it means to be older. Boomers will work longer and demand that community infrastructure be more responsive to their needs as those who “age in place.” This will further increase economic demands on communities, not to mention the Federal Government through various transportation programs. Older adults require access to services, a range of housing types and transportation options for active living in the community. According to AARP [<http://assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/ppi/liv-com/aging-in-place-2011-full.pdf>], unsupportive community design, unaffordable and inaccessible housing, and a lack of access to needed services are barriers to the desire of older adults to live in their own homes and to thrive in their communities.

Progress is being made in more than 300 age-friendly/livable community initiatives underway nationwide based on age-friendly models from organizations such as the World Health Organization, AARP and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Innovative partnerships are forming among government agencies, businesses, social service providers, aging experts, and grassroots advocacy groups to brainstorm how to make their city or town age-friendly. Further, the lifetime associations and connections rooted in place can be pivotal to successful aging. However, making cities more age-friendly can be daunting. Most experts agree that many communities have not planned for the aging boomers. Fiscal constraints are pushing some communities to cut spending on critically needed programs and services.

On the Radar & See Yourself in a Division

The APA Aging of America Initiative provides an extraordinary opportunity for planners. Join the conversation. Visit the APA **Aging and Livable Communities Initiative** online at: <http://www.planning.org/leadership/divisions/initiatives/aging/index.htm>. Also, contact the DC/CPC Task Force or Noel Comeaux (noel.comeaux@dot.gov) to get involved with this and other division initiatives.

Further, Ramona Mullahey is Past –Chair of the Private Practice Division. For more information on this and the other 20 divisions, please go to <http://www.planning.org/divisions/>. Division membership is a great way to participate in APA as well as to network with planners involved in your area of expertise and to network nationally and internationally.



American Planning Association Designates Bienville Square a Top 10 Great Public Space for 2012

The American Planning Association (APA) has announced the designation of Bienville Square as one of 10 Great Public Spaces for 2012 under the organization's Great Places in America program. APA Great Places exemplify exceptional character and highlight the role planning and planners play in adding value to communities including fostering economic growth and jobs.

APA singled out Bienville Square, the historic heart of downtown Mobile, for a design – featuring radial walkways, a central fountain, and canopy of Live Oak trees –that allows it to serve as a refuge for people and local wildlife, stunning view of the downtown skyline, and commitment among residents to both preserve this cherished icon and build upon its legacy.

“Bienville Square stands as a testament to Mobile’s resilience, its character, its historic beauty, and as a welcoming public venue that lights the path to our city’s hospitality,” said Mayor Sam Jones. “Sitting in the heart of our downtown, Bienville Square has weathered the revitalization of downtown and the transformation of the city’s skyline. It also serves as a reminder of some of the city’s greatest amenities, notably in the canopy of oak trees, the azaleas and a breathtaking look back into the city’s past.”

Through Great Places in America, APA recognizes streets, neighborhoods and public spaces whose unique and authentic characteristics have evolved from thoughtful and deliberate planning by residents, community leaders and planners. The 2012 Great Places, which offer more choices for where and how people work and live, have many of the features Americans say are important to their “ideal community” including close, locally owned businesses; transit; neighborhood parks; and sidewalks.

Since APA began Great Places in America in 2007, 60 neighborhoods, 60 streets and 50 public spaces have been designated in 50 states and the District of Columbia.

“Many consider Bienville Square the face of downtown Mobile given the square’s central location and interesting design, the skyline views it affords, and the rich architectural details of the surrounding historic buildings,” said APA Chief Executive Officer Paul Farmer, FAICP. “These qualities and features developed over time, through careful planning and an ongoing commitment to protect the Square’s uniqueness,” he added.

A variety of architectural styles blossomed around Bienville Square after an 1839 fire destroyed much of Old Mobile. An Italianate firehouse along with Victorian, Classical-Revival, Neoclassical and Art-Deco buildings flank the park, which affords outstanding views of the downtown skyline.

Replete with Live Oaks and other plantings, the park serves as habitat for local wildlife and a gathering place for residents. Its bandstand, donated by Sears, Roebuck and Co. in 1941, is a central fixture of such annual events as the Bayfest Music Festival, the Gulf Coast Ethnic and Heritage Jazz Festival, and Mardi Gras. The square’s central fountain, circa 1890, honors George Ketchum, a physician and the president of Bienville Water Works, who is noted for bringing safe drinking water to the city. St. Andrew’s Cross, erected in 1906, pays tribute to Jean Baptiste le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville, Mobile’s founder and Governor of French Louisiana.

The city has upgraded the park numerous times since its 1850 investment in walkways and landscaping. One of the most notable followed Hurricane Frederic in 1979, which reinvigorated the square and stemmed years of neglect and disuse.

Now seen as a jewel in downtown Mobile, Bienville Square is the centerpiece of a plan calling for rejuvenation of pedestrian-level shops, new directional signage and a tourist kiosk. This summer the city gave the park a facelift including repairing the central fountain, repainting the bandstand and park benches, landscaping, and updated restrooms that feature state-of-the-art cooling and heating systems.

The improvements also included installation of four security cameras, which will be linked to the police department's special events precinct. Brighter white lighting replaced the yellowish halo of existing lights. Enhancing security – something 69 percent of Americans would like planners to be involved in – is part of Mobile's plan to jumpstart retail growth in the architecturally diverse commercial area adjacent to the park.

The nine other APA 2012 Great Public Spaces are: Cesar Chavez Park and Plaza, Sacramento, CA; Washington Park, Denver, CO; Chicago Botanic Garden, IL; Chicago Union Station, Chicago, IL; Jackson Square, New Orleans, LA; Village Green, Bar Harbor, ME; Gov. Tom McCall Waterfront Park, Portland, OR; Buffalo Bayou, Houston, TX; and Ritter Park, Huntington, WV.

For more information about these public spaces, as well as APA's top 10 Great Streets and top 10 Great Neighborhoods for 2012 and previous years, visit www.planning.org/greatplaces. This year's Great Places in America are being celebrated as part of APA's National Community Planning Month during October; for more about the special month, visit www.planning.org/ncpm.

ALABAMA CHAPTER AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION 2013 AWARDS PROGRAM

Call For Nominations

The Alabama Chapter of the American Planning Association, through its Annual Awards Program, seeks to recognize the notable contributions and achievements of planning professionals, elected or lay persons, the media and our state planning students. Additionally, the chapter seeks to recognize outstanding planning programs, plans and projects prepared and implemented by local governments, private consultants, as well as other local organizations and agencies throughout the state.

The Chapter Awards Committee would like to announce that nominations for the 2013 Awards Program are now being accepted, with a deadline for accepting these nominations being set for Friday, February 1, 2013 at 5 p.m. CST. The Awards Ceremony will be held in conjunction with the ALAPA Chapter's annual meeting in Florence in May, 2013.

The Awards Committee encourages anyone who knows of any worthy persons, projects, programs or plans to give serious consideration to submitting a nomination for this year's Awards Program. The awards program information including the Awards Program categories, nomination criteria as well as the submission information is available on the ALAPA's web site, www.alabamaplanning.org.



ALAPA Scholarship Program

If you are interested in contributing to the ALAPA Scholarship Program, please contact Greg Clark, Scholarship Intern Coordinator at (334) 262-4300 or email at gclark@carpdc.com.

Jobs for Planners

If you have a job opening, or know of open positions that might be of interest to Alabama Planners, please email them to twbrown@dothan.org or mail them to:

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There is no charge for placing job postings in the newsletter.

Alabama Planner

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